

## PUBLIC LEDGER

Issued Daily Except Sunday

Telephone No. 40.

Entered at the Maysville, Ky., Post Office as second-class Mail Matter.

## BLUNDERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION

Wilson Has Failed In Foreign and Domestic Policies.

ROOT SHOWS HIS ERRORS.

Address as Temporary Chairman of New York Republican Convention Points Out Sins of Democratic Commission and Omission—"We Have Lost Influence Because We Have Been Brave in Words and Irresolute in Action."

In his address as temporary chairman of the New York state Republican convention, delivered in Carnegie Hall, New York, the Hon. Elihu Root said:

We are entering upon a contest for the election of a president and the control of government under conditions essentially new in the experience of our party and of our country. The forms and methods which we are about to follow are old and familiar, but the grounds for action, the demand of great events for decision upon national conduct, the moral forces urging to a solution of vaguely outlined questions, the tremendous consequences of wisdom or folly in national policy, all these are new to the great mass of American voters now living. Never since 1864 has an election been fraught with consequences so vital to national life. All the ordinary considerations which play so great a part in our presidential campaigns are and ought to be dwarfed into insignificance.

**Democratic Party to the Bar.**

For the first time in twenty years we enter the field as the party of opposition, and indeed it is a much longer time, for in 1896, in all respects save the tariff, the real opposition to the sturdy and patriotic course of President Cleveland was to be found in the party that followed Mr. Bryan. It is our duty as the opposition to bring the Democratic party to the bar of public judgment, to put it upon its defense so far as we see just and substantial grounds to criticize its conduct and to ask the voters of the country to decide whether that party, organized as it is, represented as it has been since it came into power, has shown itself competent to govern the country as it should be governed and whether its spirit, its policies, and its performance are the best that the American people can do in the way of popular self-government.

In the field of domestic affairs some facts relevant to these questions had already been ascertained when in August, 1914, the great European war began. During the year and a half of Democratic control of government in a period of profound peace there had been a steady decrease in American production, in exports and in revenues and a steady increase in imports and expenditures. Enterprise had halted. The Democratic tariff had been framed upon an avowed repudiation of all protection, however moderate and reasonable, and because all protection was repudiated practically all information from competent witnesses as to the effect new provisions would have upon business was rejected. It was with just cause that the enterprise of the country halted, timid and irresolute, because it felt and feared the hostility of government.

**Foreign Competition After War.**

The great war has not changed the lesson which we had already learned when it began. It has but obscured further demonstration. It has caused an enormous demand for some things which the United States is able to produce in large quantities, and in these lines of production, while other industries

will languish, there have been extensive employment of labor, great exports and a great influx of money. But this is temporary. It must soon cease, and when the factories have stopped and their laborers are no longer employed we must deal with a situation for which we have no precedent. The war has paralyzed the peaceful industries of all Europe and has stopped that competitive foreign production which in July, 1914, had already entered American markets to supersede American products under the tariff law of 1913. The war has thus given to American products an immunity from competition far more effective than any possible protective tariff. But that is temporary, and when the war is over, when foreign production begins again, the American market compared with impoverished Europe will be more than ever before the object of desire and effort, and we shall become the dumping ground of the world to the destruction of our own industries unless that is prevented by a wise and competent government.

**How Can We Defend Ourselves?**

But it is not from domestic questions that the most difficult problems of this day arise. The events of the last few years have taught us many lessons. We have learned that civilization is but a veneer thinly covering the savage nature of man. How can this nation, which loves peace and intends justice, avoid the curse of militarism and at the same time preserve its independence, defend its territory, protect its lives and liberty and property of its citizens? How can we prevent the same principles of action, the same policies of conduct, the same forces of military power which are exhibited in Europe from laying hold upon the vast territory and practically undefended wealth of the new world? Have we still national ideals? Will anybody live for them? Would anybody die for them? Or are we all for ease and comfort and wealth at any price? Confronted by such questions as these and the practical situations which give rise to them, is the country satisfied to trust itself again in the hands of the Democratic party?

**Impotent Interference in Mexico.**

The United States had rights and duties in Mexico. More than 40,000 of our citizens had sought their fortunes and made their homes there. A thousand millions of American capital had been invested in that productive country. But revolution had come, and factional warfare was rife. Americans had been murdered, American property had been wantonly destroyed, the lives and property of all Americans in Mexico were in danger. That was the situation when Mr. Wilson became president in March, 1913. His duty then was plain. It was, first, to use his powers as president to secure protection for the lives and property of Americans in Mexico and to require that rules of law and stipulations of treaties should be observed by Mexico toward the United States and its citizens. His duty was, second, as the head of a foreign power to respect the independence of Mexico, to refrain from all interference with her internal affairs, from all attempt at domination except as he was justified by the law of nations for the protection of American rights. The president of the United States failed to observe either of those duties. He deliberately abandoned them both and followed an entirely different and inconsistent purpose. He intervened in Mexico to aid one faction in civil strife against another. He undertook to pull down Huerta and set Carranza up in his place. Arms and munitions of war were freely furnished to the northern forces and withheld from Huerta. Finally the president sent our army and navy to invade Mexico and capture its great seaport, Vera Cruz, and hold it and throttle Mexican commerce until Huerta fell.

**Americans Outraged in Mexico.**

The government of the United States intervened in Mexico to control the internal affairs of that independent country and to enforce the will of the American president in those affairs by threat, by economic pressure and by force of arms. Upon what claim of right did this intervention proceed? Not to secure respect for American rights, not to protect the lives or property of our citizens, not to assert the laws of nations, not to compel observance of the law of humanity. On the contrary, Huerta's was the only power in Mexico to which appeal could be

made for protection of life or property. That was the only power which, in fact, did protect either American or European or Mexican. It was only within the territory where Huerta ruled that comparative peace and order prevailed. The territory over which the armed power of Carranza and Villa and their associates extended was the theater of the most appalling crimes. Bands of robbers roved the country with unbridled license. Americans and Mexicans alike were at their mercy, and American men were murdered and American women were outraged with impunity. Thousands were reduced to poverty by the wanton destruction of the industries through which they lived. Yet the government of the United States ignored, condoned, the murder of American men and the rape of American women and insult to American officers and soldiers of the American flag and joined itself to the men who were guilty of all these things to pull down the power of Huerta. Why? The president himself has told us. It was because he adjudged Huerta to be a usurper, because he deemed that the common people of Mexico ought to have greater participation in government and share in the land, and he believed that Carranza and Villa would give them these things. We must all sympathize with these sentiments, but there is nothing more dangerous than misplaced sentiment.

When our army landed at Vera Cruz Carranza himself, who was to be the chief beneficiary of the act, publicly protested against it. So strong was the resentment that he could not have kept his followers otherwise. When Huerta had fallen the new government which for the day had succeeded to his place peremptorily demanded the withdrawal of the American troops. The universal sentiment of Mexicans required the peremptory demand, and the troops were withdrawn. Still worse than that, the taking of Vera Cruz destroyed confidence in the sincerity of the American government in Mexico, because every intelligent man in Mexico believed that the avowed reason for the act was not the real reason. The avowed purpose was to compel a salute to the American flag. Three hundred Mexicans were reported killed; seventeen United States marines were killed and many were wounded. At that very time Mr. Bryan, with the president's approval, was signing treaties with half the world agreeing that if any controversy should arise it should be submitted to a joint commission and no action should be taken until after a full year had elapsed. This controversy, slight as it was, arose on the 9th of April, and on the 21st of the same month Vera Cruz was taken. With the occupation of Vera Cruz the moral power of the United States in Mexico ended. We were then and we are now hated for what we did to Mexico, and we were then and we are now despised for our feeble and irresolute failure to protect the lives and rights of our citizens. No flag is so dishonored and no citizenship so little worth the claiming in Mexico as ours. And that is why we have failed in Mexico.

**Policy of "Watchful Waiting."**

Incredibly as it seems, Huerta had been turned out by the assistance of the American government without any guarantee from the men who were to be set up in his place, and so the murdering and burning and ravishing have gone on to this day. After Huerta had fallen and the Vera Cruz expedition had been withdrawn President Wilson announced that no one was entitled to interfere in the affairs of Mexico; that she was entitled to settle them herself. He disclaims all responsibility for what happens in Mexico and contents himself with a policy of watchful waiting. And for the death and outrage, the suffering and ruin of our own brethren, the hatred and contempt for our country and the dishonor of our name in that land the administration at Washington shares responsibility with the human brutes with whom it made common cause.

When we turn to the administration's conduct of foreign affairs that is due to the great war in Europe we cannot fail to perceive that there is much dissatisfaction among Americans. Dissatisfaction is not in itself ground for condemnation. The situation created by the war has been difficult and trying. Much of the correspondence of the state department, especially since Mr. Lansing took charge, has been characterized by accurate learning and skillful statement of specific American rights.

**Three Errors in European Policy.**

A study of the administration's policy toward Europe since July, 1914, reveals three fundamental errors. First, the lack of foresight to make timely provision for lacking up American diplomacy by actual or assumed military and naval force; second, the forfeiture of the world's respect for our assertion of rights by pursuing the policy of making threats and failing to make them good; third, a loss of the moral forces of the civilized world through failure to truly interpret to the world the spirit of the American democracy in its attitude toward the terrible events which accompanied the early stages of the war.

First, as to power: When the war in Europe began, free, peaceable little Switzerland instantly mobilized upon her frontier a great army of trained citizen soldiers. Sturdy little Holland did the same, and both have kept their territory and their independence inviolate.

Great, peaceable America was farther removed from the conflict, but her trade and her citizens traveled on every sea. Ordinary knowledge of European affairs made it plain that the war was begun not by accident, but with purpose which would not soon be relinquished. Ordinary knowledge of military events made it plain from the moment when the tide of the Marne turned that the battle of the Marne was the battle of certain to be long and desperate. Ordinary knowledge of history—of our own history during the Napoleonic wars—made it plain that in that conflict neutral rights would be worthless unless powerfully maintained.

The Democratic government at Washington did not see it. Others saw it, and their opinions found voice. Mr. Gardner urged it, Mr. Lodge urged it,

Mr. Stimson urged it. Mr. Roosevelt urged it, but their argument and urgency were ascribed to political motives, and the president described them with a sneer as nervous and excited.

**Wilson Has Shifted Ground.**

But the warning voices would not be still. The opinion that we ought no longer to remain defenseless became public opinion. Its expression grew more general and insistent, and finally the president, not leading, but following, has shifted his ground, has reversed his position and asks the country to prepare against war. God grant that he be not too late. But the Democratic party has not shifted its ground. A large part of its members in congress are endeavoring now to sidetrack the movement for national preparedness, to muddle it by amendment and turn it into channels which will produce the least possible result in the increase of national power of defense. What sense of effectiveness in this effort can we gather from the presence of Joseph Daniels at the most critical post of all—the head of the navy department—when we see that where preparation has been possible it has not been made, when we see that construction of warships already authorized has not been pressed and in some cases after long delay has not even been begun?

If an increase of our country's power to defend itself against aggression is authorized by the present congress it must be largely through Republican votes, because all the traditions and convictions of that party are for national power and duty and honor.

As to the policy of threatening words without deeds:

When Germany gave notice of her purpose to sink merchant vessels on the high seas without safeguarding the lives of innocent passengers our government on the 10th of February one year ago informed Germany in unmistakable terms that in attacking and sinking vessels of the United States and in destroying the lives of American citizens lawfully traveling upon merchant vessels of other countries she would act at her peril. They pledged the power and courage of America, with her hundred million people and her vast wealth, to the protection of her citizens, as during all her history through the days of her youth and weakness she had protected them.

On the 28th of March the passenger steamer *Paluba* was torpedoed by a German submarine and an American citizen was killed, but nothing was done. On the 29th of April the American vessel *Cushing* was attacked and crippled by a German aeroplane. On the 1st of May the American vessel *Guilford* was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine and two or more Americans were killed, yet nothing was done. On the 7th of May the *Lusitania* was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine and more than 100 Americans and 1,100 other non-combatants were drowned. The very thing which our government had warned Germany she must not do, Germany did set purpose and in the most contemptuous and shocking way. Then, when all America was stirred to the depths, our government addressed another note to Germany. It repeated its assertion of American rights and renewed its bold declaration of purpose. It declared again that the American government "must hold the Imperial German government to a strict accountability for any infringement of those rights, intentional or incidental," and it declared that it would "omit no word or any act necessary to the performance of its sacred duty of maintaining the rights of the United States and its citizens and of safeguarding their free exercise and enjoyment."

Still nothing was done and a long and technical correspondence ensued, haggling over petty questions of detail, every American note growing less and less strong and peremptory until the *Arabic* was torpedoed and sunk and more American lives were destroyed, and still nothing was done, and the correspondence continued until the allied defense against German submarine warfare made it unprofitable and led to its abandonment, and the correspondence is apparently approaching its end without securing even that partial protection for the future which might be found in an admission that the destruction of the *Lusitania* was forbidden by law. The later correspondence has been conducted by our state department with dignity, but it has been futile. An admission of liability for damages has been secured, but the time for real protection to American rights has long since passed.

The brave words which we began the controversy with produced no effect, because they were read in the light of two extraordinary events. One was the report of the Austrian ambassador, Mr. Dumha, to his government that when the American note of Feb. 16 was received he asked the secretary of state, Mr. Bryan, whether it meant business and received an answer which satisfied him that it did not, but was intended for effect at home in America.

**"Too Proud to Fight."**

The other event was the strange and unfortunate declaration of the president in a public speech in Philadelphia the fourth day after the sinking of the *Lusitania* that "a man may be too proud to fight." Whatever the Austrian ambassador was in fact told by the secretary of state, the impression which he reported was supported by the events which followed. Whatever the president did mean, his declaration, made in public at that solemn time, said the horror and mourning of all our people over the murder of their children, was accepted as the attitude of the American government toward the protection of the life and liberty of American citizens in the exercise of their just rights, and throughout the world the phrase "too proud to fight" became a byword of derision and contempt for the government of the United States.

Later, in another theater of war—the Mediterranean—Austria, and perhaps Turkey also, resumed the practice. The *Ancona* and then the *Perla* were destroyed, and more Americans were killed. Why should they not resume the practice? They had learned to believe that no matter how shocked the American government might be, its resolution would expend itself in

words. They had learned to believe that it was safe to kill Americans, and the world believed with them.

**Shaking Fist and Finger.**

No man should draw a pistol who dares not shoot. The government that shakes its fist and its finger toward falls into contempt. Our diplomacy has lost its authority and influence because we have been brave in words and irresolute in action. Men may say that the words of our diplomatic notes were justified; men may say that our inaction was justified, but no man can say that both were wise and creditable.

I have said that this government lost the moral forces of the world by not truly interpreting the spirit of the American democracy.

The American democracy stands for something more than beef and cotton and grain and manufactures; stands for something that cannot be measured by rates of exchange and does not rise or fall with the balance of trade. The American people, informed by their own experience that is confirmed by their observation of international life, have come to see that the liberty of nations, justice and humanity cannot be maintained upon the complacency, the good nature, the kindly feeling of the strong toward the weak; that real independence, real liberty, cannot rest upon suffering; that peace and liberty can be preserved only by the authority and observance of rules of national conduct founded upon the principles of justice and humanity; only by the establishment of law among nations, responsive to the enlightened public opinion of mankind. To them liberty means not liberty for themselves alone, but for all who are oppressed. Justice means not justice for themselves alone, but a shield for all who are weak against the aggression of the strong.

To this people the invasion of Belgium brought a shock of amazement and horror. If the public opinion of the world was to remain silent upon that neutral upon that, then all talk about peace and justice and international law and the rights of man, the progress of humanity and the spread of liberty is idle pretence, mere weak sentimentality; then opinion is powerless and brute force rules and will rule the world. If no difference is recognized between right and wrong then there are no moral standards. There come times in the lives of nations as of men when to treat wrong as if it were right is treason to the right.

**The Wrong Done to Belgium.**

The American people were entitled not merely to feel, but to speak concerning the wrong done to Belgium. It was not like interference in the internal affairs of Mexico or any other nation, for this was an international wrong. The law protecting Belgium which was violated was our law and the law of every other civilized country. That law was the protection of our peace and security. It was our safeguard against the necessity of maintaining great armaments and wasting our substance in continual readiness for war. Moreover, that law was written into a solemn and formal convention, signed and ratified by Germany and Belgium and France and the United States in which those other countries agreed with us that the law should be observed.

There was no question here of interfering in the quarrels of Europe. We had a right to be neutral, and we were neutral as to the quarrel between Germany and France, but when as an incident to the prosecution of that quarrel Germany broke the law which we were entitled to have preserved and which she had agreed with us to preserve we were entitled to be heard in the assertion of our own national right.

**Neutral Between Right and Wrong.**

Yet the American government acquiesced in the treatment of Belgium and the destruction of the law of nations. Without one word of objection or dissent to the repudiation of law or the breach of our treaty or the violation of justice and humanity in the treatment of Belgium our government enjoined upon the people of the United States an indiscriminating and all embracing neutrality, and the president admonished the people that they must be neutral in all respects in act and word and thought and sentiment. We were to be not merely neutral as to the quarrels of Europe, but neutral as to the treatment of Belgium, neutral between right and wrong, neutral between justice and injustice, neutral between humanity and cruelty, neutral between liberty and oppression. Our government did more than acquiesce; for in the first *Lusitania* note, with the unspeakable horrors of the conquest of Belgium still fresh in our minds, on the very day after the report of the Bryce commission on Belgian atrocities, it wrote these words to the government of Germany:

Recalling the humane and enlightened attitude hitherto assumed by the Imperial German government in matters of international right and particularly with regard to the freedom of the seas, having learned to recognize the German views and the German influence in the field of international obligation as always exercised upon the side of justice and humanity, etc.

And so the government of the United States appeared as approving the treatment of Belgium. It misrepresented the people of the United States in that acquiescence and apparent approval. It was not necessary that the United States should go to war in defense of the violated law. A single official expression by the government of the United States, a single sentence denying assent and recording disapproval of what Germany did in Belgium, would have given to the people of America that leadership to which they were entitled in their earnest groping for the light. It would have ranged behind American leadership the conscience and morality of the neutral world.

It was not to be. The American government failed to rise to the demands of the great occasion. Guns were the old love of justice, the old passion for liberty, the old sympathy with the oppressed, the old ideals of an America, helping the world toward a better future, and there remained in the eyes of mankind only solitude for trade and profit and prosperity.

**Shrank From the Truth.**

The American government could not shrink from the truth. (Continued on Third Page)

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